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El Tejon Indians, California.



528 Federal Bldg.,  
Los Angeles, Cal.,  
April 24, 1920.

The Attorney General,  
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

Preliminary to carrying out our plan to see whether a satisfactory settlement could be made by agreement with the owners of the Mexican grant upon which the Tejon Indians are settled, before bringing suit, we thought it desirable that Mr. Prosser, as well as myself, be familiar with the situation on the ground. He and I, therefore, went to the Tejon ranch this week (with Mr. Crotts, Supervising Engineer of the Indian Service.) After going over the Indian lands and talking to the Chief, we endeavored to open negotiations with the owners of the ranch through the resident manager, Mr. Lopez. He was absent, so we talked with Mr. de Billier. We learned from this gentleman that Mr. Lopez doubtless would not wish to go into a matter of this sort, and that the proper man to see would be Harry Chandler, who is one of the owners and, so far as we could find out, the active executive head of the syndicate. Mr. Chandler, we have just found on returning to Los Angeles, is expected back here on May 7th, he being now in the east. It is our plan to see him at the first opportunity on his return.

We took advantage of our being in Bakersfield and at Porterville to see Mr. Emmons, who has on several occasions acted as at-

torney for the Indians, and several others who have shown an interest in protecting the Indians' rights. (We also saw Mr. Virtue, the Superintendent of the Tule River Indian Reservation, under whose jurisdiction these Rejon Indians come.)

On our trip we learned more about a project for the County's establishing a school for these Indians about which Mr. Prosser heard something while in Washington recently. The Superintendent of Schools in Berkeley, Mr. E. B. Chenoweth, told us that the plan was to have the ranch company lease to the County two acres of land for school purposes. It seems to us that it would be clearly unwise for the Government to become a party in any way to such a lease or approve it, if it covered land now occupied by the Indians or which we claim as rightfully covered by the Indians' title of occupancy and possession, unless the lease clearly showed that it did not deny the Indians' title and merely expressed the willingness of the ranch owners who have the fee title to have the land in question used for school purposes. We suppose that any lease that the ranch owners would be willing to give would not make these distinctions and so the Government's taking part in the County's accepting such a lease might involve a sort of recognition of a complete title and right of occupancy in these ranch owners. We have therefore called this to the attention of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and have advised him to guard against any such result. Our understanding is that the County expects the Government to pay a part of the cost of erecting a school building, and our suggestion is that if this is done or if the Government in any other way takes part in the matter, it do so in such a way as to

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show that it does not recognize the ranch owners' fee title to the exclusion of the Indians' occupancy title.

We shall, of course, report as soon as we have had our conference with Mr. Chandler.

Respectfully,

Special Assistant to the Attorney General.